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ABSTRACT

The 11-lesson instructional unit, "Work and Your Life," is designed for adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students at intermediate to advanced levels. Its focus is on the student's exploration of work and other lifestyle issues. The teacher functions as the facilitator or guide, while the student uses self-knowledge and outside resources to make adjustments to the realities of the American workplace. Portions of the unit can be used separately, and lessons can be modified to meet particular student needs. The general unit outline is as follows: (1) introduction and determination of unit goals; (2) goals and values--generalized; (3) individual exploration of goals and values; (4) work and individual values--U.S. specific; (5) more information about work in the United States--values; (6) using the library as a resource; (7) presenting information about work in the United States; (8) utilizing people as resources; (9) looking at individual interests; (10) self-assessment of skills; and (11) recognizing accomplishments. A sample activity for lesson 3, "Time--How Do You Use It?", is appended. Contains 13 references. (LB)

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ED 364 121

Work and Your Life

An Adult ESL Instructional Unit
(Lessons in Work/Life Planning)

Poster Session
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for
TESOL '93

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Work and Your Life

This instructional unit, Work and Your Life, is designed for adult ESOL students at intermediate to advanced levels. It is appropriate for use in college or adult education programs.

The unit's focus is on the student and his/her exploration of work and other lifestyle issues. The teacher functions as the facilitator, or guide, while the student proceeds to use self knowledge and outside resources to explore such questions as:

* What is work?
* What do I think is important?
* Why do I think something is important?
* What am I interested in?
* What am I good at?

Helping adults make successful adjustments to the realities of the American workplace is the motivation for this unit. These realities include the necessity for job-seekers to know how to locate job opportunities, the importance of being able to successfully articulate skills and accomplishments to potential employers, and the value in understanding underlying assumptions in American culture about work and its place in American society. A teacher could use the original motivation for this unit or could tailor the lessons specifically for his/her students.

A willingness to modify activities is essential when considering the teaching environment. As an example, the presenter used portions of this unit relevant to the career needs of a group of Saudi Arabian computer specialists with which she was working. For these men, their primary interest was in exploring career options for themselves within their own cultural context. As a

matter of curiosity, they requested information about American workplace hiring practices. However, they were far more interested in developing language skills that would help them talk about their jobs with English speaking colleagues in Saudi Arabia.

Modification of lessons is in order when considering other factors, including the emotional and physical maturity of students. As a theoretical base, Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development from early infancy to late adulthood provide a framework for creating classroom activities. A further consideration is the teacher's knowledge and appreciation of economic and educational realities for individual students. For example, activities regarding interview skills for people who need immediate employment may well be more relevant to them than class time spent on exploring interests.

All of the above areas call for the teacher to trust each student's ability to know what is important and to explore, discover and exercise his/her own power of choice. Carl Rogers' book, On Personal Power, presents the tenets of this person-centered approach to learning. A person-centered ESL educational model means that the teacher's role is to **facilitate**, to help a student self-explore the issues of work and one's life. Such exploration as done in the English language classroom means that the teacher, as resource, provides assistance in mastering skills (in other words, learning vocabulary to talk about job skills and building reading ability). This enables the student to continue with the task of identifying and obtaining work which matches his/her lifestyle requirements. The unit represents one teacher's

attempt to help students toward this end. It is the presenter's belief that such exploration will be beneficial in terms of language learning within the larger context of life-learning.

Note: This unit is intended to pique student interest in work/life planning. It does not supplant the very important work done by career counselors and employment professionals.

General Unit Outline

Lesson #1 Introduction and Determination of Unit Goals

Discussion of definitions of work. Sharing of ideas about work.

> Sample activity: Students make and discuss semantic webs for the words "work" and "values". Focus on vocabulary/oral communication.

Introduction to print resources. Books include What Color Is Your Parachute?, Discover What You're Best At and Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Interviewing.

Lesson #2 Goals and Values - Generalized

Exploration of goals and values.

> Sample activity: Groups work with a reading about values (definition of, consideration of external vs. internal values, values clarification). Focus on group process (communicative skills) and ability to learn vocabulary from context.

Lesson #3 Individual Exploration of Goals and Values

Continued development of students' ideas about goals and values.

> Sample activity: Students complete individual charts on how they use time. Cultural viewpoints on time discussed. Teacher provides information on U.S. concepts in workplace and in society. Focus on working with a graphic, oral communication and listening.

Lesson #4 Work and Individual Values - U.S. Specific

Studying U.S. notions about work.

> Sample activity: Students develop questions about work in the U.S. Outside speaker from the business community invited to class. Focus on question formation, asking questions, and listening.

Lesson #5 More Information About Work in the U.S. - Values

Exploration of work/values - related issues.

> **Sample activity**: Reading from a U.S. publication such as a business journal or newspaper about a work-related issue. One class read an article from The Washington Post on stress. Focus on reading skills and writing.

Lesson #6 Using the Library as a Resource

Using the library to obtain information about work.

> **Sample activity**: Students conduct library searches for basic information such as the names of major employers and the types of jobs they provide within an area. Focus on library skills and notetaking.

Lesson #7 Presenting Information About Work in the U.S.

Using information obtained in the library for oral presentations.

> **Sample activity**: Students present library information. Focus on oral presentation and notetaking skills.

Lesson #8 Utilizing People as Resources

Obtaining information from other people with special knowledge.

> **Sample activity**: Special speaker invited to discuss work with the class. One class invited a career professional from a local college to discuss how technical graduates obtained jobs.

Lesson #9 Looking at Individual Interests

Beginning the process of exploring personal interests.

> **Sample activity**: Students talk and write about their interests and outside activities. Personal journals and small groups are ideal for this process. Focus on oral communication and writing.

Lesson #10 Self-Assessment of Skills

Sample activity: Students utilize a skills listing (The Quick Job-Hunting Map by Richard Bolles is an excellent resource) to identify skills.

Note: This is a cursory look at skill identification. Students should be referred to career professionals for in-depth analysis and assessment of skills and abilities.

Lesson #11 Recognizing Accomplishments

Identifying accomplishments that may or may not be work-related.

Sample activity: Each student writes a composition about an accomplishment in his/her life. Note: an accomplishment need not be work-related, and indeed, may not be with younger students. Small groups identify specific skills used in achieving accomplishments. Focus on writing, oral communication and vocabulary development.

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(Sample Activity for Lesson #3)

Time--How Do You Use It?

Skills:

This is a communicative speaking exercise which also utilizes skills in reading and following directions in English.

Objective:

This is a values clarification activity for high-intermediate to advanced students of English as a Foreign Language or English as a Second Language. Individuals think about and discuss their time and how they use it. This simple, yet engaging exercise, can provide a forum for individuals to explore the connections between one's values, life-style priorities, needs, and wants. **Note: a previous discussion of values, what they are and how they are reflected in one's life would be a natural antecedent activity.**

Teacher's role:

The teacher is the discussion facilitator. As such, it is crucial that he/she display a non-judgmental attitude. Students need to know that they have the opportunity during this values exercise to express themselves freely. It is suggested that small groups provide an ideal setting for individuals to do this. The teacher may want to assign groups if he/she knows that more reticent students, for example, may work better with those supportive of their efforts to express themselves.

Time for activity:

50 minutes for discussion. Students will have completed the reading and individual selection portion outside of class.

Discussion suggestions:

Following are suggested discussion questions/ideas for students to consider:

1. How difficult (or easy) was it for you to think about your time and how you use it?

2. Did you have any trouble being accurate in your assessment of your time?

3. What activities take the most of your time?

4. What activities take the least of your time?

5. Are you satisfied with how you use your time? If so, is this a temporary situation for you? Do you see your life changing in the near future? If you are not satisfied, why not? Can you be specific?

6. What are your three most important values? Does your use of time reflect your values? If not, why not?

7. How does how you use your time on the weekend compare to how you use your time during the week?

Description of activity:

Time--How Do You Use It?*[1]

Time and how you use it can be a mirror of your priorities and needs. Have you ever thought about how use your time? Does how you use your time reflect your values? Take a few minutes to read and complete the following exercise. There are no right or wrong answers. Each person will have something different to say depending on his or her unique life situation. You will discuss this exercise in class.

*Instructions: Below is a list of words and phrases about activities in which individuals are engaged throughout the day. Make a checkmark beside each one that is important to you. Then, look at the "pies." There is one for the weekdays and one for the weekend. Divide each of them into the approximate percentages of time in which you spend your day. For example, if you spend 33% of each day sleeping, then outline a section of each pie representing 33% and write a. 33%. If you spend 50% of weekends watching television, then outline a section of the weekend pie representing one-half of your time and write c. 50%.

a. Eating

b. Working at a job

c. Sleeping

d. Being with my family

e. Watching television

f. Studying/attending classes

g. Shopping

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[1] An idiomatic expression used in American English is "How do you spend your time?"

h. Doing hobbies or sports

i. Socializing with my friends

j. Participating in religious activities

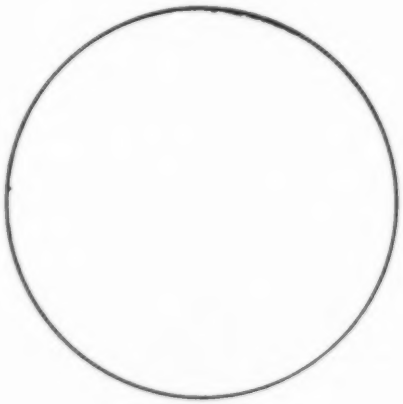
k. Going to and from school or work (commuting)

l. Doing chores around the house

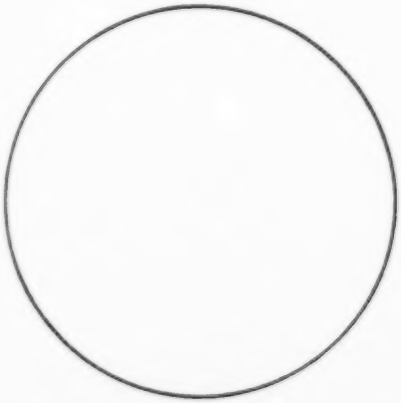
m. Doing volunteer activities (helping others)

n. Doing any other activities: List them.

Weekdays



Weekends



References

Bolles, R.N. (1981). The three boxes of life and how to get out of them: An introduction to life/work planning. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

This book incorporates narrative and exercises for the person who wishes to actually do life/work planning. Highlights include: a leisure map, a section to help analyze their functional/transferable skills, and rules for survival job-hunting.

Bolles, R.N. (1992). What color is your parachute? Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

This is the classic work/life planning book. Bolles updates it extensively each year. (It has been on the market for over 20 years.) The appendices alone are very complete and provide one with numerous resources. The style is personal and compelling; it is a must read.

Crystal, J.C. & Bolles, R.N. (1974). Where do I go from here with my life? Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

This is an in-depth instructional workbook for work/life planning. It is an excellent reference and worth the time to review.

Figler, H. (1988). The complete job-search handbook. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

This is as the title says, a complete-job search book. Figler, the Director of Placement at the University of Texas at Austin, knows his subject and presents it in a readable and thoughtful way.

Gale, B. & L. (1982). Discover what you're best at: The national career aptitude system and career directory. New York: Simon and Schuster.

This is a self-help book in which emphasis is on self-administering and scoring of a system for evaluating one's skills. It lists 1000 careers.

Gysbers, N.C. & Moore, E.J. (1987). Career counseling: Skills and techniques for practitioners. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

This text is written for the counseling professional, however, it provides a clear explanation of what career counselors do. Topics include: a perspective on the career-conscious individual, life career development and implications for the field of counseling.

Hallett, J.J. (1987). Worklife visions: Redefining work for the information economy. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Personnel Administration.

Hallett introduces his book with a quote from Adam Smith, "People are the premier resource and primary responsibility of any country." It is an apt choice for a book which attempts to add perspective to the changing work force in the U.S., a work force primed for the 21st century.

Hansen, J.C., Stevic, R.R. & Warner, R.W. (1977). Counseling theory and process (2nd ed). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

See pages 51-53 for a chart and narrative of explanation on Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages of development.

Isaacson, L.E. (1978). Career information in counseling and teaching (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

This reference text contains information on many topics, such as theories of career development, factors influencing workers and their careers, and how to use career information.

Levinson, D.J. (1978). The seasons of a man's life. New York: Ballantine Books.

Although it is gender specific, Levinson's book gives us a view of the adult developmental process in men with implications for women. The final chapter, "Tasks and Possibilities of Adult Development," raises important points for teachers of adult students.

Lindquist, C. L. & Feodoroff, P.L. (Eds.). (Seventh Edition, 1989-1991). Where to start career planning: Essential resource guide for career planning and job hunting. Cornell University Career Center. Princeton, N.J.: Peterson's Guides, Inc.

An extensive listing of current career-planning and job-hunting materials for students and others who are interested in career exploration and job hunting. Sections include a number of career fields, three pages of resources for foreign students, and eight pages on overseas employment and travel.

Medley, H. A. (1984). Sweaty palms: The neglected art of being interviewed. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

This how-to book will help anyone who has to interview for a job. It would be excellent reading for anyone who works with ESL students who wish to enter the U.S. job market.

Rogers, C. (1977). On personal power: Inner strength and its revolutionary impact. New York:Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

This book by one of America's most influential psychotherapists is very useful for understanding humanistic theory as applied to teaching. If you wonder what the term facilitator means for teachers, then this is the book to read. (See chapter 4, Power or persons: two trends in education.)